

Ilham Aliyev
President of Azerbaijan
19 Istiqlaliyyat Street
Baku AZ1066
ASERBAIDSCHAN

2026

Farid Mehralizade, Ulvi Hasanli, Muhammad Kekelov, Sevinj Vagifgyzy, Elnara Gasimova, Nargiz Absalamova, Hafiz Babali, Khayala Agayeva, Aytaj Ahmadova, Aynur Ganbarova, Natig Javadli, Aysel Umudova, Ramin Deko (Jabrayilzade), Ulvi Tahirov and other independent journalists

Dear President,

I am much concerned about the unlawful detention of some media professionals in the context of the 2024 UN Climate Change Conference (COP29), seemingly in retaliation for their critical reports.

In June 2025, a court in Baku sentenced Radio Free Europe correspondent Farid Mehrizade, and six journalists from the investigative news portal AbzasMedia to prison terms of between seven and a half and nine years: director Ulvi Hasanli, his deputy Muhammad Kekelov, editor-in-chief Sevinj Vagifgyzy, journalists Elnara Gasimova and Nargiz Absalamova, and investigative journalist Hafiz Babali.

Six employees of the news channel Meydan TV, Khayala Agayeva, Aytaj Ahmadova, Aynur Ganbarova, Natig Javadli, Aysel Umudova and Ramin Deko (Jabrayilzade), as well as the deputy director of the Baku School of Journalism, Ulvi Tahirov, have been in pre-trial detention since December 2024. Two of them are said to have been tortured and ill-treated, while others are being denied the necessary medical care.

Within the European Council, Azerbaijan is apparently the country with the largest number of detained journalists. I urge you to take all necessary steps to ensure an immediate release of all media workers in Azerbaijan who were merely arrested to stop their independent critical reports. Also, please initiate an effective investigation into all allegations of intimidation, abuse and fabricated accusations.

Yours sincerely,